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TOWN OF ORANGETOWN  
RICH IN HISTORY

# 01

## Introduction & Project Overview



Joseph B Clarke Rail Trail, Sparkill © AKRF

## What is a Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is the official public long-term planning document that establishes a community's goals and aspirations for the future, while providing a roadmap for how to achieve them. In New York State, the comprehensive plan provides the rationale for the zoning and other land use regulations found in the Town Code. The comprehensive plan presents a snapshot of the current state of the Town, and offers guidance for its future. Through a series of public workshops, community surveys, committee work sessions, and public hearings the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) and the Town Board garnered input from residents, community leaders, Town staff, and business owners. This input from the Orangetown community is reflected in the Comprehensive Plan's goals and recommendations and will serve as a guiding framework for the Town's growth and development in the coming years.

### Definition of "Comprehensive Plan"

A "comprehensive plan" is defined in New York State Town Law §272-a.2(a) as "the materials, written and/or graphic, including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, reports and other descriptive material that identify the goals, objectives, principles,

guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the town located outside the limits of any incorporated village or city."

All land regulations (e.g., zoning, subdivision, natural resource protection) must be "in accordance with a comprehensive plan," pursuant to New York State Town Law §263. Consequently, the policies articulated in a comprehensive plan serve as the basis for future revisions to the Town's land use regulations. But a comprehensive plan is not the law. Rather, the plan only sets the direction and goals for the community and recommends, in a general way, how to achieve them.

The process of preparing the comprehensive plan engages Town residents, business owners, officials, and leaders in discussions about what is working, what is not working, and how the Town views its potential in the short, medium, and long-term.

The comprehensive plan presents a vision grounded in the practical reality of a community's natural, financial, and physical resources and constraints.

The goals and action items in the Town of Orangetown 2022 Comprehensive Plan are based on local priorities for land use patterns, economic growth, resource protection, and quality of life. Unanimous agreement about the future is not the goal of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan. Rather it strives to balance the opinions that collectively manage change. The 2022 Comprehensive Plan should reflect a coherent vision of a diverse population, from children to senior citizens, and newcomers to generational residents. The Town of Orangetown 2022 Comprehensive Plan sets forth goals and actions that will enable the Town to navigate changes in resources, and to thrive as a desirable place to live, work, and recreate for decades to come.



Intersection of Fifth Avenue and Sickletown Road, Blauvelt © AKRF

## How Do You Use a Comprehensive Plan?

The comprehensive plan presents an overall vision for the future of a municipality, establishes goals to achieve that vision, recommends specific strategies, and assigns responsibility for implementing the comprehensive plan's recommendations. It is an action plan, setting out goals and objectives to achieve the community's vision, and a working document, which should evolve with the changing needs of the community.

### Official Policy Document

When a Town Board adopts a comprehensive plan, the Town Board affirms the plan as an official policy document, and thus, it is key that the plan represents the views of the entire community. Thus, it is necessary that the vision for the future, as set out in the plan, has been vetted by the community, and identifies key action items. The plan also provides a blueprint for use by the Town government, land use boards, volunteer groups and committees, and local residents and business owners, to implement recommendations that promote appropriate growth and development in the town.

### Does Not Affect Zoning Code Nor Existing Property Rights

Adoption of a comprehensive plan by a Town Board, on its own, does not affect the town's zoning code, nor does it restrict existing private property rights of residents. However, applications for development submitted to the Town's reviewing boards must be considered in the context of the goals and objectives set out in the comprehensive plan. If an application is inconsistent with the goals of a comprehensive plan, the applicant must then justify to the relevant reviewing board that the project will not contradict the overall town goals set out in the comprehensive plan.

Lastly, while a comprehensive plan may (and usually will) recommend changes to the town's zoning code to achieve the plan's stated goals, actual changes to the zoning code require a separate and distinct process. The comprehensive plan is a tool to guide development, but not an instrument to change existing laws and codes.

The real success of any comprehensive plan lies in its implementation. Without successful implementation, the plan is of little benefit to a municipality.



Orangetown Town Hall © AKRF

## Comprehensive Plan History and Planning Process

### An update to the Town of Orangetown's 2003 Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Orangetown 2022 Comprehensive Plan was produced with the input of elected officials, town staff, community leaders, business owners, and residents, who through a robust public engagement process led by the CPC shaped its vision, goals, and recommendations. The Town of Orangetown last updated its plan in 2003. This new plan builds on the policies and action items of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, as well as subsequent special area plans and technical studies, to establish a guiding framework for future sustainable development, economic growth, and natural resource preservation in the Town.

### Town of Orangetown 2003 Comprehensive Plan

In 2000, the Orangetown Town Board initiated a process to update the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The Town Board retained professional planning consultants and established a committee of town residents and officials to assist in the drafting of that Plan. The plan evolved over a two-year planning process that involved twelve community meetings and two formal public hearings. A Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) was prepared pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and a Findings Statement was adopted on September 23, 2002. The 2003 Comprehensive Plan was adopted on May 12, 2003.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Town Board Meeting Minutes, May 12, 2003. <https://www.orangetown.com/meeting/special-town-board-meeting-may-12th-2003/> (retrieved December 27, 2021).

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan established five main goals:

1. **Recreation and Open Space** – Provide additional open space and recreation facilities to serve existing and anticipated population needs and balance development and environmental preservation goals;
2. **Residential Development** – Provide decent housing for present and future residents;
3. **Commercial, Office, and Industrial Development** – Provide local employment opportunities, necessary tax ratables, and a broad array of services for community residents;
4. **Transportation and Infrastructure** – Support residential and commercial development while balancing environmental preservation; and
5. **Community Facilities** – Maintain an adequate level of service, while concurrently planning for the projected growth in the Town’s senior population, an increased level of ethnic and racial diversity, and the changes in service that those factors could generate.

To achieve these goals, the 2003 Comprehensive Plan provided zoning and land development recommendations in its “Implementation” chapter. Those recommendations, and their respective outcomes, are summarized in **Table 1-1** and **Table 1-2**.

**Table 1-1**  
**2003 Comprehensive Plan Recommendations and Outcomes**

Topic Area	Recommendation	Outcome
NYS Route 303 Office and Industrial Zoning	Retain existing office and industrial zoning (LI, LO, LIO), but reduce maximum development. Lower FAR in LI from 0.5 to 0.4; Lower FAR in LIO and LO from 0.4 to 0.3; require landscape buffers on lots with NYS Route 303 frontage.	No reduction in maximum FAR within the Route 303 Overlay Zoning District (see Zoning Code §§13.1 to 13.10; other land use restrictions imposed under § 13.10, including landscaped buffers.
NYS Route 303 Density for Commercial Development	Lower the CC zoning FAR along NYS Route 303 from 0.3 to 0.2; in Tappan area of Route 303, rezone CS to CC.	No change to FAR; no rezoning.
Sparkill Creek Area	Route 303 Sustainable Development Study called for creation of Sparkill Creek greenway path.	Unclear if this was done
Environmental Protection Regulations and Cluster Development	Adopt regulations to protect sensitive environmental areas, including features related to development – (i) on steep slopes; (ii) along prominent ridgelines; (iii) within or in close proximity to wetlands and waterbodies to require 100-foot buffer.  Planning Board should use its authority to mandate cluster design techniques.  Designate additional Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs) in the Town.	Unclear if this was done
Innovative Zoning Techniques	For vacant and underutilized parcels of land throughout the Town, encourage incentive zoning, floating zones (likes planned unit development), and clustering.	Unclear if this was done

Topic Area	Recommendation	Outcome
Senior Housing	A clearly established Town policy on senior citizen housing, along with appropriate standards for each type of living arrangement should be articulated in the Zoning Code.	Planned Adult Community (PAC) floating zone added to Zoning Code (§ 4.6) in 2004.
Upzoning	Undertake rezoning to reduce density in the Clausland Mountain area, including Tweed Boulevard and Route 9W, changing zoning from R-22 to R-40.  Upzone quasi-public sites, including existing public school district sites and properties owned by various colleges, to R-80.	Unclear if this was done
Landscaping Development Sites	Zoning Code needs to establish minimum standards for landscape treatment. Consider amending parking regulations to require planting islands, street trees, and/or sidewalks.	Unclear where within code this might have been incorporated, if at all
Houses and Lot Size	Consider lowering FARs for single-family home construction; add maximum impervious surface zoning requirement for residential properties; update the Orangetown Street Specifications for Subdivisions (Chapter 40 of Town Code)	These recommendations were not implemented.
Zoning in Pearl River	Revise commercial zoning in Pearl River, in order to strengthen Central Avenue as a mixed-use development.	TOD regulations were proposed for Pearl River in 2019, but have not yet been adopted.
Administration	Planning and zoning in Orangetown is complicated by multi-agency reviews required by Zoning Code – recommend updating the Zoning code to assign approvals to appropriate boards.	Need to confer with Town Officials about changes to approval responsibility since 2003, if any.

Sources: Town of Orangetown Comprehensive Plan (2003), Chapter V, pages V-1 to V-15.

**Table 1-2**  
**2003 Comprehensive Plan Short-Term Action Program**

Topic Area	Recommendation	Outcome
Zoning Code	Comprehensive revision of the Zoning Ordinance and related land development regulations, including environmental protection regulations and watercourse diversion regulations, and senior citizen zoning recommendations.	No comprehensive revision.
Downtown Revitalization	Continuation of downtown revitalization program in Pearl River, including visual design, zoning, and promotion efforts described in Comp Plan. Implement similar efforts in other hamlet centers.	A special area plan and TOD regulations were proposed but not adopted.
Open Space	Acquisition and development of additional open space and recreational facilities, including portions of the Rockland Psychiatric Center site.	No development at Rockland Psychiatric Center.
Overlay Zoning	Continued implementation of Overlay Zoning District and safety improvements along NYS Route 303 as called for in the Route 303 Sustainable Development Study.	Based on community feedback through the 2022 Comprehensive Planning process, the Route 303 Overlay Zoning District should be revisited.

Sources: Town of Orangetown Comprehensive Plan (2003), Chapter V, pages V-1 to V-15.

**An update to the Town of Orangetown's 2003 Comprehensive Plan**

**2022 Comprehensive Plan**

A comprehensive plan should be updated periodically to reflect changing demographics and community needs. In 2020, the Town of Orangetown embarked on an update to its Comprehensive Plan by releasing an RFP for a planning consultant to guide the Town through the comprehensive plan process. The Town engaged two consultants - AKRF, Inc., and MUD Workshop in May 2021, and meetings between the Town and consultants began in June 2021. At the September 28, 2021, Town Board Meeting, the Town Board appointed members to a Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC), to work with the consultants and oversee the drafting the 2022 Comprehensive Plan.<sup>2</sup> The CPC consists of seven members: Town of Orangetown Supervisor Teresa Kenny, Chairperson of the CPC, and six additional Town of Orangetown employees - Allison Kardon, Jane Slavin, Jim Dean, Eamon Reilly, Aric Gorton, and Richard Pakola. Between September 2021 and [Month, 2022], the CPC met monthly to review progress on the Comprehensive Plan. All meetings were available for public viewing either in person or on a virtual platform, and meeting agendas, minutes, and other relevant documents were posted to the Town's website (URL).

**Community Outreach**

Various community outreach efforts were undertaken during the Comprehensive Plan process. These efforts were promoted throughout the Town of Orangetown using digital broadcasting on the Town's website and through social media, and periodic email blasts (with flyers and links) sent by the Town to its residents. Engagement in the planning process was also promoted at the Pearl River Day Festival on October 16, 2021, and individually by members of the CPC by reaching out to community leaders and groups known to the CPC members.



Lobby Setup at Public Workshop, December 6 © AKRF

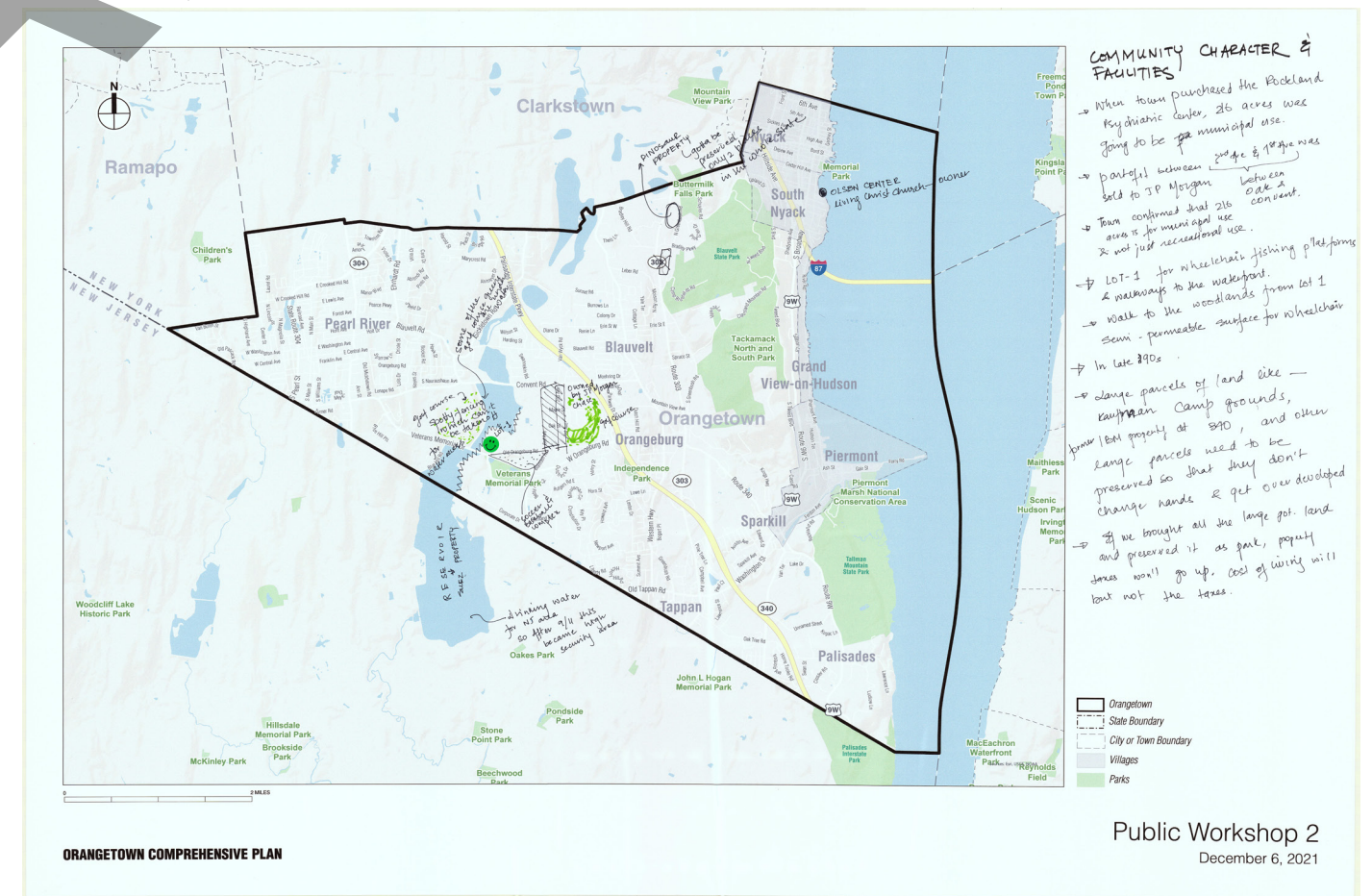
The CPC conducted a public survey from September 28 to November 3, 2021. During that time, the survey received 1,097 responses. The public survey included multiple choice questions and descriptive inputs regarding Comprehensive Plan elements including land use, transportation, open space, development, economics, and sustainability. The results of the public survey are included as part of Appendix \_\_\_\_. The CPC also conducted a survey of town officials from September 28 to November 3, 2021. During that time, the survey received 70 responses from town officials across nineteen (19) different boards and departments. The results of the town officials survey are included as part of Appendix \_\_\_\_.

<sup>2</sup> Town Board Meeting Minutes, September 28, 2021. <https://www.orangetown.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/M09.28.21-RTBM-Exhibits.pdf> (retrieved December 27, 2021).

Additionally, the CPC hosted several public workshops. During the public workshops, participants were invited to discuss their vision for the future and provide recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan Update. These were conducted on October 18, 2021 (via a virtual platform), on December 6, 2021 (in-person), and December 7, 2021 (via a virtual platform).

**October 18, 2021 Workshop**

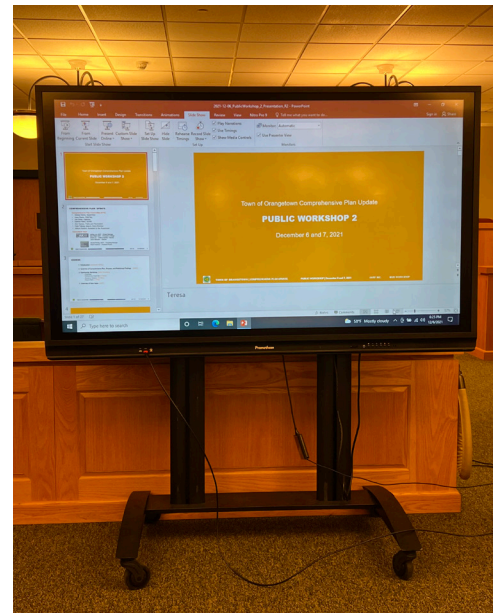
During the October 18, 2021 workshop, AKRF and MUD presented information on existing conditions in the Town, as well as the initial results of the public survey (which was ongoing at that time). Workshop participants participated in two visioning exercises, "Vision Wall" and "Tag-a-Photo", during which they were able to provide place-based feedback specific to multiple themes including community facilities, sustainability, land use, housing, and transportation and mobility. Through the "Vision Wall" exercise, participants were able to express approval or disapproval for various goals and objectives across multiple categories, and respond with comments. [illustration] Through the "Tag-a-Photo" exercise, participants were able to select a specific location on a map of Orangetown, tag the location as "Something I like", "Something I don't like", or "A priority I have", and provide associated commentary, and if desired upload a photo to support the participant's point.



Participant Generated Map, December 6 © AKRF

**December 6 (In-Person) and December 7 (Online), 2021 Workshop**

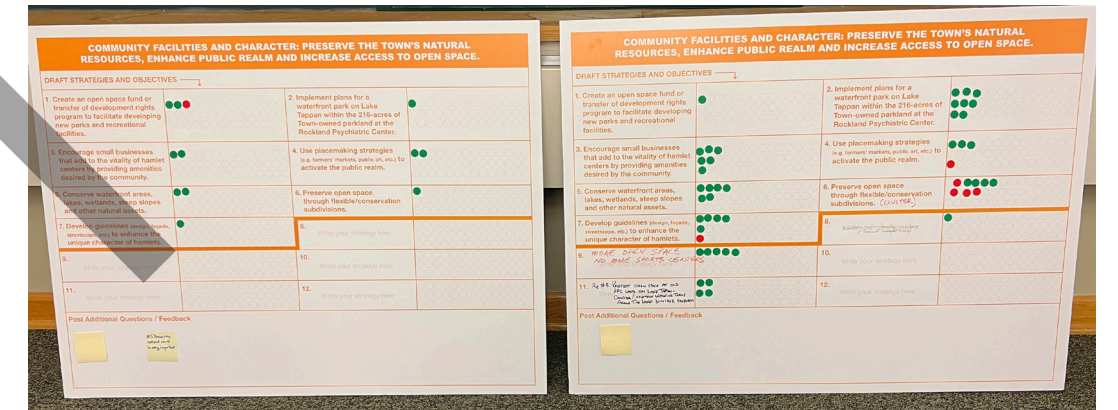
During the December 6 in-person and December 7 online workshops (which included the same content as one another) the Town's consultants presented an overview of the comprehensive planning process, as well as the final results of the public survey. Participants of those workshops were then able to participate in various exercises. During "Dotmocracy", participants indicated whether they supported various goals and strategies, and were able to suggest edits to those goals and strategies, or offer entirely new ones. Feedback from the participants was subsequently used to revise the goals and strategies of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan to better align with public feedback and concerns.



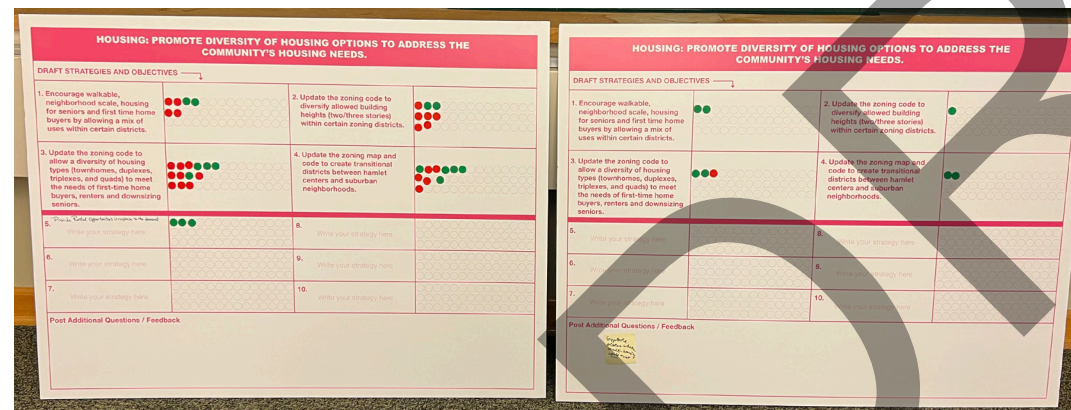
Public Workshop on December 6 © AKRF

**[description of planning process January 2022 to completion]**

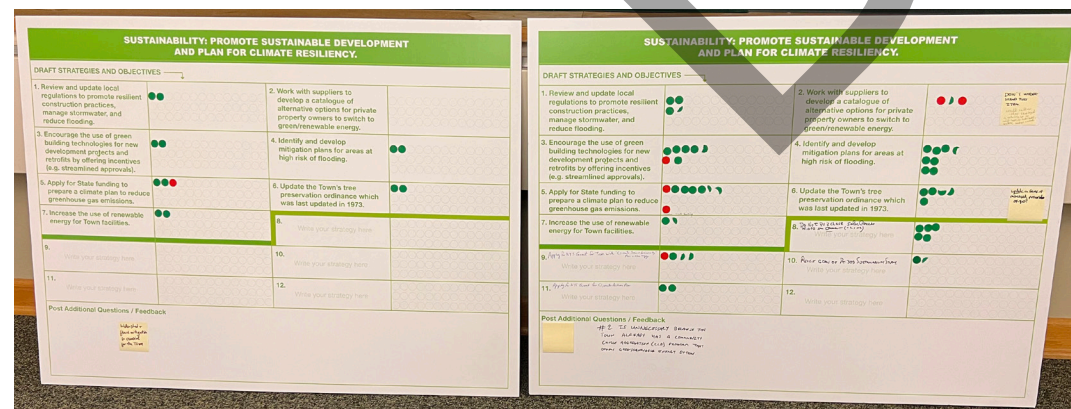
Following the surveys and public workshops, the CPC continued monthly meetings as the 2022 Comprehensive Plan was drafted.



Complete "Dotmocracy" Boards at Public Workshop, December 6 © AKRF



Complete "Dotmocracy" Boards at Public Workshop, December 6 © AKRF



Top Image: "Dotmocracy" Boards at Public Workshop. Bottom Image: Breakout Tables at Public Workshop, December 6 © AKRF

# Comprehensive Plan Organization

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into seven chapters, as follows:

- 1 Introduction and Project Overview**

A discussion of the use and purpose of a comprehensive plan, the history and planning process for the 2022 Comprehensive Plan, and the vision, goals, and objectives established by the 2022 Plan.
- 2 Current and Future Land Use, Zoning, and Design**

Existing and proposed plans for Town-wide land use, including suggested changes to land use mechanisms and the Town's Zoning Code.
- 3 Community Character and Historic Resources**

Discussion of the overall character of the Town, as well as the unique character of the seven hamlets (Blauvelt, Orangeburg, Palisades, Pearl River, Sparkill, Tappan, and Upper Grand View), identification of historic resources, and strategies for community and historic preservation.
- 4 Transportation, Mobility, and Parking**

An overview of existing transportation infrastructure in the Town, and recommendations for improving mobility, travel patterns, and infrastructure, along with suggested implementation strategies.
- 5 Economic Development and Downtown Revitalization**

Tools and initiatives that promote economic development while protecting and enhancing the qualities of downtown areas of the Town, especially within the Hamlets.
- 6 Open Space and Recreation, Sustainability, Green Infrastructure, and Climate Resiliency**

Recommendations for assessing and protecting the Town's natural resources, and fortifying the Town's infrastructure against future environmental challenges and changes.
- 7 Next Steps, Action Items, and Implementation**

An implementation plan with designated timelines.

Comprehensive Plans are most actionable when the goals advanced are realistic and achievable. Without a detailed a specific program for implementing those goals, comprehensive plans risk becoming an academic exercise, rather than an actionable plan for the future. Therefore, comprehensive plans must also consider local government constraints and priorities, funding

challenges, and regulatory processes. As such, Chapter 7 of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan details the strategies and recommendations found throughout Chapters 2 through 6, and offers concrete short-, medium-, and long-term steps that the Town may take to realize its vision for the future.

# Vision, Goals, and Objectives

With its natural beauty, convenient location, quality schools, cultural resources, and historic hamlets, Orangetown is a wonderful community to live in. An overarching goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to enhance the quality-of-life features and community resources that drew residents and businesses to the Town.

**Goal 3**

Saintain the Town's community and neighborhood character while balancing the need for growth and development.

- Objective 1** Encourage an appropriate balance of residential and non-residential development.
- Objective 2** Update and modernize the zoning code to simplify enforcement, remove inconsistencies, and regulate new land uses not previously contemplated.
- Objective 3** Develop design guidelines for façades, signage, and streetscapes to preserve, protect, and enhance the unique characteristics of each hamlet.
- Objective 4** Develop measures to increase the efficiency of the code / zoning enforcement process.
- Objective 5** Discourage new warehouse and distribution center land uses in certain zoning districts, particularly near residential areas.
- Objective 6** Develop design guidelines and performance standards to better regulate certain land uses, and to protect open space, viewsheds, historic resources, and community character.
- Objective 7** Strengthen zoning and code protections for natural resources such as wetlands, trees, stormwater, flooding, steep slopes, and ridgelines.

Residential Housing, Blauvelt © AKRF



Goal 2

Preserve history, open space, and hamlet center character, while promoting a diversity of housing options in appropriate neighborhoods to ensure members of the community have access to quality housing.

- Objective 1** Update the zoning code to allow a diversity of housing types (e.g. townhomes, duplexes, mixed-use buildings, and apartment building style condominiums) in certain areas to meet the needs of first-time home buyers/renters and downsizing seniors looking to stay within the community.
- Objective 2** Maintain an adequate supply of senior housing for a variety of income levels.
- Objective 3** Where appropriate, update the zoning map and code to create transitional districts between hamlet centers and suburban neighborhoods.
- Objective 4** Establish efforts and mechanisms, including more robust zoning and development enforcement, to protect and preserve hamlet character.

Goal 3

Strengthen the Town’s transportation network for vehicles, pedestrians, and alternative modes of mobility.

- Objective 1** Design and implement context-sensitive dedicated bicycle lanes (on- and off-road) to improve bicycle access and safety.
- Objective 2** Provide additional sidewalks throughout the Town to improve pedestrian access and safety.
- Objective 3** Create a road maintenance program, with dedicated capital funds.
- Objective 4** Create pedestrian-friendly, walkable streets in key hamlet centers by limiting traffic during certain times on low-traffic roadways.
- Objective 5** Implement walkable, green streetscapes and rights-of-way.
- Objective 6** Establish performance standards within the Town’s zoning code to mitigate traffic impacts. Address congestion and parking shortage in key areas.
- Objective 7** Update zoning code to include design guidelines and protections for rural and scenic roadways.
- Objective 8** Encourage more robust enforcement of traffic regulations, particularly those related to semi-truck, delivery, and warehouse traffic.

- Objective 9** Implement a Complete Streets policy.
- Objective 10** Introduce traffic calming into residential neighborhoods where streets are wider than needed by introducing channelization, adding bikes lanes, shoulders, and traffic circles to reduce vehicle speeds.
- Objective 11** Work with local transit providers (e.g., Rockland Coaches, Metro-North, etc.) to expand and improve transit service.



Intersection of North Middletown Road and NYS Route 304, Pearl River © AKRF

Goal 4

Promote sustainable development and plan for climate resiliency.

- Objective 1** Identify and develop mitigation plans for areas at high risk of flooding, including making improvements to public infrastructure (e.g., sewers).
- Objective 2** Increase the use of renewable energy for Town facilities.
- Objective 3** Encourage the use of green building technologies for new development projects and retrofits by offering incentives (including streamlined approvals).
- Objective 4** Encourage the installation of EV (electric vehicle) charging stations in public areas.



- Objective 5** Review and update local regulations to promote resilient construction practices, manage stormwater, and reduce flooding.
- Objective 6** Update the Town’s tree preservation ordinance (Chapter 35, “Trees and Shrubbery”) which was last updated in 1973, to establish most robust preservation regulations.
- Objective 7** Build on the success of the Town’s Community Choice Aggregation Program and provide additional Town incentives for green energy such as fast-tracked approvals and tax incentives.
- Objective 8** Create and enforce regulations to limit noise and air pollution coming from light industrial zoned areas, especially those close to residential neighborhoods.
- Objective 9** Revisit goals of the 2002 Route 303 Sustainable Development Study.
- Objective 10** Apply for grants, such as the New York State Climate Smart Communities Grant, to implement sustainability objectives and prepare a Climate Action Plan.



Downtown Pearl River © AKRF

**Goal 5**

Preserve the Town’s natural resources and increase access to parks and open space.

- Objective 1** Encourage preservation of open space through flexible/conservation subdivisions which cluster new development to preserve larger contiguous areas of open space.
- Objective 2** Work with the New York State legislature to establish a preservation fund that can be used to acquire property for open space, recreation, or historic reservation.
- Objective 3** Establish a long-term open space preservation plan to guide the implementation of the Town’s open space fund.
- Objective 4** Encourage conservation of waterfront areas, lakes, wetlands, steep slopes and other natural assets.
- Objective 5** Implement the plans for a waterfront park on Lake Tappan within the 216-acres of Town-owned land at the Rockland Psychiatric Center, including walking trails, wheelchair accessible trails, and access to water for passive recreation activities.
- Objective 6** Encourage conversion of inactive rail lines into rail trail facilities to develop a network connecting with trails in adjacent municipalities.

**Goal 6**

Provide a healthy economic environment for community-based businesses that maintain the Town’s tax base and provide jobs and services to the Town’s residents.

- Objective 1** Encourage small businesses and support downtown revitalization by exploring grant and funding opportunities.
- Objective 2** Encourage small businesses that add to the vitality of hamlet centers by providing cultural, recreational, and entertainment amenities desired by the community.
- Objective 3** Utilize placemaking strategies such as annual community events, pop-up holiday markets, farmers markets, public art, and live entertainment to draw residents and visitors to the community, patrons to local businesses, and to activate the public realm.